

**EMAMI ART**

# **THE DREAM OF AN IDIOT**

**SIBAPRASAD KARCHAUDHURI**

**Tapestries, Paintings, Drawings, Prints**

**Curated by Ushmita Sahu**

**July 14 - September 30, 2023**

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# THE DREAM OF AN IDIOT

SIBAPRASAD KARCHAUDHURI

Tapestries, Paintings, Drawings, Prints

Curated by **Ushmita Sahu**

*The Dream of an Idiot*, a compact survey show of artist and pedagogue Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri, encompasses the significant phases of Karchaudhuri's long and productive career across four decades, bringing to light the rich consonance that marks his practice.

A weaver, painter, printmaker and designer, Karchaudhuri (born in 1944) studied at the Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta, from where he graduated in 1966 in applied arts, a subject he had enrolled under parental insistence. Karchaudhuri, however, loved painting in his spare time, and unlike most artists in the 1960s Bengal, who favoured figurative art, he was attracted to a non-figurative fluid approach. After completing his studies, he started working at the Calico Mill in Ahmedabad. 1968 was pivotal in his life when several young designers from the mill were sent for training in the newly established textile and fibre arts department at the National Institute of Design under the guidance of renowned weaver and textile designer Nelly Sethna and the influential Finnish textile designer Helena Perheentupa who joined as faculty. The institution's vibrant cultural atmosphere and Perheentupa's eclectic modernist outlook and experimental approach to teaching and making had a lasting impact on him. Karchaudhuri's inclination towards abstraction was redefined at NID, and his work started imbibing elements from Indian and European design and tapestry traditions. Looking back, black-and-white drawing exercises in Perheentupa's classes, his interactions with her and NID's radical new method of teaching informed his understanding of design and textile weaving techniques. He also had the opportunity to learn about loom weaving from Nelly Sethna.

From NID, he went on to work as an art designer in the Weavers Service Center in 1969, where he worked with professional weavers for two decades, moving over the years between Varanasi, Bhagalpur and Kolkata. The WSCs, founded by Pupul Jayakar, aimed to create a symbiotic relationship of learning and facilitation between artisans and artists employed at the various centres to help develop and modify designs. Karchaudhuri started imbibing lessons he learnt from the artisans in his experiments, creating massive tapestries. Although, for him, the mass production and commercial aspect were secondary to the artistic and craft aspect of making, like many of the painters and sculptors employed by the WSC, the artisanal and creative collaboration was reflected in his work. In the mid-1980s, he joined as a regular faculty at NID's Department of textile design, teaching there for almost a year before he moved to California, where he took up printmaking under Geoffrey Bowman at San Jose University. All these diverse learning experiences enabled him to understand the essential roles of form and colour, crafts and material in creating artwork without extraneous content.

He returned to India and worked once more at the WSC before moving on to the next critical chapter of his life in the 1990s when he joined the design department at Kala Bhavana. A perceptive teacher and pedagogue, he contributed to revamping the department, particularly its creative design section, based on an extensive syllabus made by KG Subramanyan. The KG syllabus explored functional designs, as taught historically in the institution, and expressional design, which aimed to connect the curriculum to global modernist trends and art practice. In his teaching, Karchaudhuri emphasised the expressional, introducing exercises with the design source material. This period also defines his engagement with the frame loom as a tool for creative expression. This kind of loom is a basic square frame that allows the warp yarns held at tension, to be hand knotted/interlaced with weft yarns allowing textured pile heights or tufts of organic fibre with a three-dimensional effect to be left undisturbed on the surface. Karchaudhuri's body of wall hangings is characterised by diligent craftsmanship, simplicity of form, and an organic approach. These evocative tapestries made of hemp, cotton, wool and other natural fibres form a significant part of his variegated oeuvre. In an essay for Karchaudhuri's solo exhibition, KG Subramanyan wrote, *'Shiva Prasad's tapestries are delightfully ambivalent. At one look, they are abstract fields where broken lines, zig-zags and patches of colour waltz around; at another, they evoke a landscape or scene with various atmospheric nuances, though he is abstemious, even austere, in his use of colour and other devices. But it is this halfway house, this see-sawing between design and description, that is their unique attraction. It provokes the viewer's interest and sustains it through a play of hide and seek.'*

Karchaudhuri's work, motifs and colours have always been impacted by where he lives and works and its physical environs, and one can see that his style has changed with the change of location – from Kolkata to Bhagalpur to Santiniketan. An oft-repeated motif - the triangle, inverted or upright, has traces to the local tribal community as well as traditional Indian temple weaving motifs. Indeed, as evident in the works on view, Karchaudhuri views these abstract forms and motifs not as opposed to realism but as linked to the idea of the origin of life and expression itself and open to interpretation. Approaching his eightieth year, Karchaudhuri divides his daily studio time between painting and drawing, more recently taking up small tapestries again. The artist has always tried to inform his drawings and paintings with a similar fluidity; hence, these, too, have a distinctive visual and pictorial quality reminiscent of the woven element. While the exhibition is witness to the artist's maturity of style and the use of the material as experimentation, it is also an elegy to his long engagement with form as a field of profound experience.

Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri lives and works in Santiniketan, West Bengal, India.

**Ushmita Sahu**  
Director, Emami Art

*\*The title of the exhibition is taken from an eponymous work by Karchaudhuri*

## SIBAPRASAD KARCHAUDHURI (b. 1944)



Born in 1944 in West Bengal, Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri studied Applied Arts at the Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta, graduating in 1966. He took training in design under Helena Perheentupa, a Finnish Designer at NID, Ahmedabad, during 1968-69 and Graphic Art under Geoffrey Bowman at San Jose State University, California, during 1984-85. He taught at the textile design department at NID during 1981-82 and later at Kala Bhavana Visva Bharati University Santiniketan from 1990 to 2009. Karchaudhuri also worked for two decades at the Weavers Service Centres in Varanasi, Bhagalpur and Kolkata between 1969 and 1989.

He has been the subject of several solo shows at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata (1968, 1973). San Jose State University Gallery, California, USA (1985); Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay (1998); Shajahan Art Gallery, New Delhi (1998); 'Tapestry, Drawing and Painting', at Nandan, Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan (2016) and 'Nymphs and Other Ethereal Images' at Gallery Charubasona, Kolkata (2023).

His work has featured in several group exhibitions, including Four Artists Group Show, sponsored by American University Centre (1974); Five Artists Group Show at Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata (1978); 'Selected painters of Kolkata', organized by TATA centre, Kolkata (1979), Sixth Bharat Bhavana Biennial of Contemporary Indian Art, Bhopal, M.P. (1997); 'Artists from Santiniketan' organized by La-Maier Art Gallery, Kolkata (1998), Selected Teachers works of Four Major Art Colleges of Bengal organized by Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata/Delhi (2001), 'Art of Santiniketan Masters and Emerging Artists', presented by S.A. Fine Arts, London (2002), 'The Art of Santiniketan: Masters and Emerging Artists at the Royal College of Art', London (2008), 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Exhibition, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata (2010) and many more.

Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri lives and works in Santiniketan.

# Installation Views

EMAMI ART

**THE DREAM OF AN IDIOT**  
**SIBAPRASAD KARCHAUDHURI**

Tapestries, Paintings, Drawings, Prints

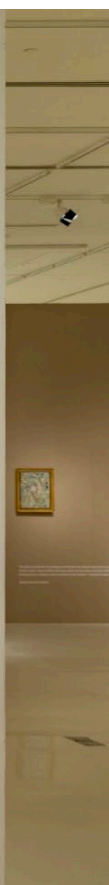
Curated by **Ushmita Sahu**

**JULY 14 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2023**

**GALLERY 1**



Small informational label on the wall.



*The Dream of an Idiot*, a survey show of artist and pedagogue Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri, encompasses the significant phases of the artist's long and remarkable career across four decades, bringing to light the rich consonance that marks his practice.

A weaver, painter, printmaker and designer, Karchaudhuri (born in 1944) studied at the Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta, from where he graduated in 1966 in applied arts, a subject he had enrolled under parental insistence. He, however, loved painting in his spare time, and unlike most artists in the 1960s Bengal, who favoured figurative art, he was attracted to a non-figurative fluid approach. After completing his studies, he started working at the Calico Mills in Ahmedabad. In 1968 he trained under the influential Finnish textile designer Helena Perheentupa at the newly established textile department at the National Institute of Design. From NID, he went to the Weavers Service Center in 1969 to work as an art designer. In the mid-1980s, Karchaudhuri joined as a regular faculty at NID's Department of textile design, teaching there for almost a year before he moved to California, where he took up printmaking under Geoffrey Bowman at San Jose University. All these diverse learning experiences enabled him to understand the essential roles of form and colour, crafts and material in creating artwork without extraneous content.

He returned to India and worked again at the WSC before moving on to the next critical chapter of his life in 1990 when he joined the design department at Kala Bhavana. A perceptive teacher and pedagogue, he contributed to revamping the department, particularly its creative design section, based on an extensive syllabus made by KG Subramanyan. The KGS syllabus explored functional designs, as taught historically in the institution, and expressional design, which aimed to connect the curriculum to global modernist trends and art practice. In his teaching, Karchaudhuri emphasised the expressional, introducing exercises with the design source material. This period also defines his engagement with the frame loom as a tool for creative expression.

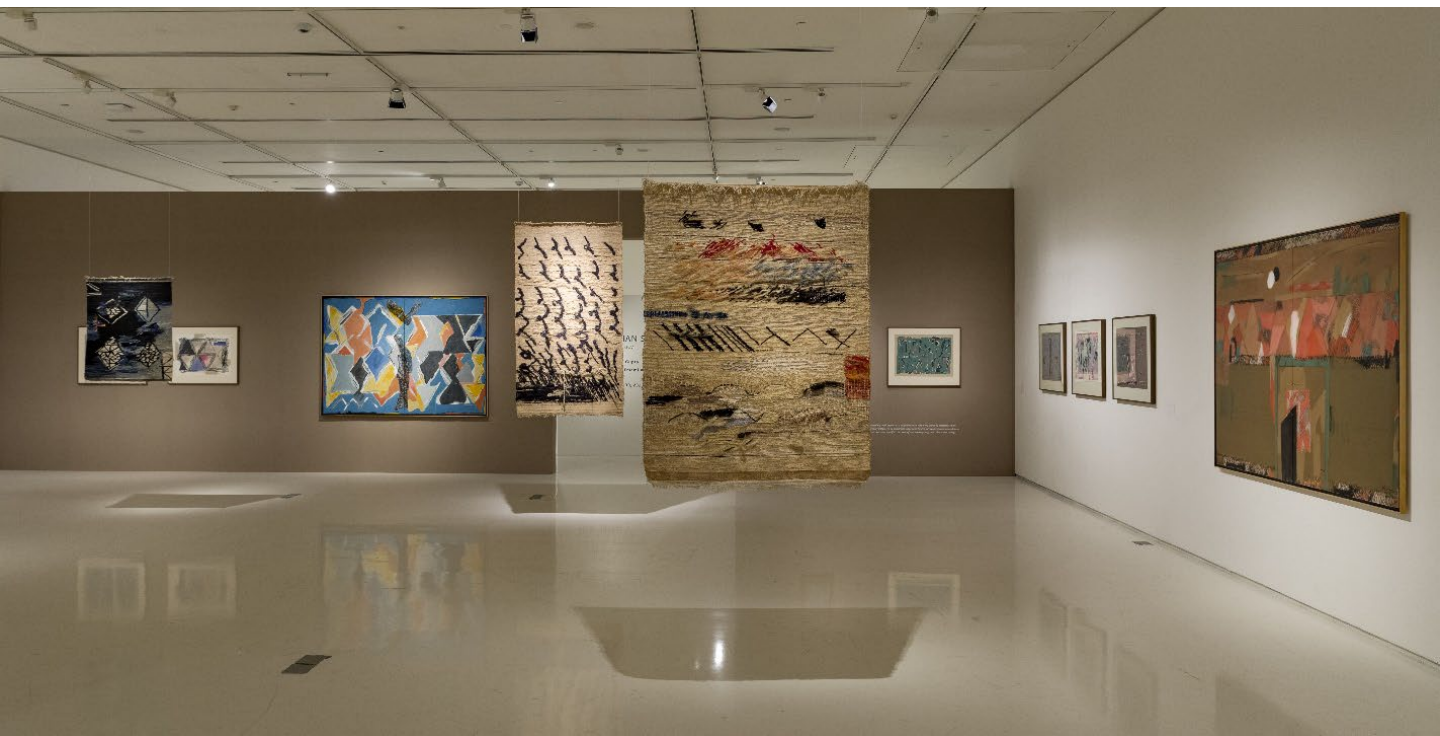
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Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri lives and works in Santiniketan, West Bengal, India

Ushmita Sahu

*The title of the exhibition is taken from an eponymous work by Karchaudhuri.*



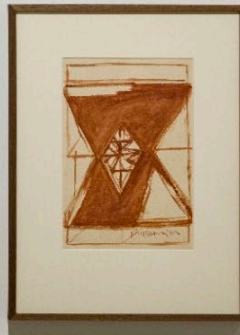
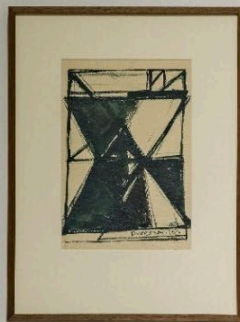














2011 was a significant year in the history of the art world, marked by the emergence of new digital art forms and the continued exploration of traditional media. The exhibition 'Digital Art: A New Frontier' explores the intersection of technology and art, featuring works by leading digital artists. The text on the wall provides a detailed overview of the digital art movement, its history, and its impact on the contemporary art scene. It discusses the role of digital technology in creating new forms of expression and the challenges artists face in this medium. The text is presented in a clean, modern font, reflecting the aesthetic of the digital art it describes.

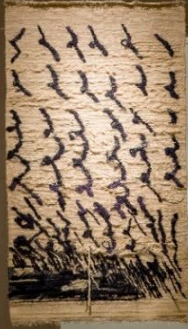


1968 was a significant year in Sitapatil's artistic journey. He was appointed as the director of the newly established textile and fibre art department at NID, and the influential Finnish textile designer Heikki Perheentupa joined him at NID, and his work started introducing elements from traditional Perheentupa's classes, his interactions with her and a visit to Finland. He also had the opportunity to learn about lacemaking from her.

He joined the Weavers Service Center in 1969 to work as an artist, where he worked for several years in Varanasi, Bhagalpur and Kolkata. The WSC focused on folk art and crafts, and he worked with many artists employed at the various centres to recreate and modernize traditional crafts, including lacemaking, creating massive tapestries. Although for him, the traditional lacemaking was not the main focus, but of the painters and sculptors employed by the WSC, he was also involved in creating the lacemaking.

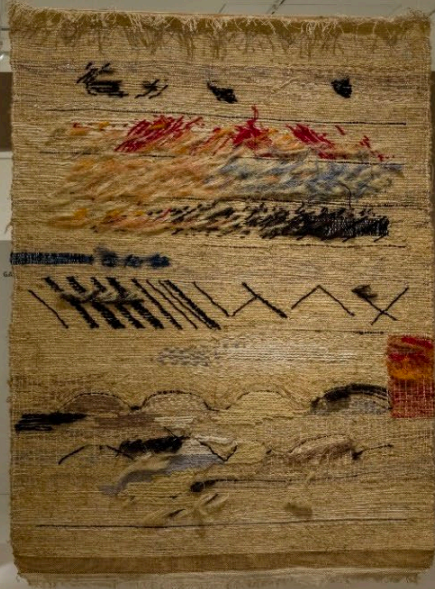


# TAPESTRIES



SEN

Art







Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Rising Upward*

Cotton, wool and hemp fiber

72 x 40 in. (182.8 x 101.6 cm.)

Circa late 1990s to early 2000s, Santiniketan

Unsigned

AB1573

Detail of *Rising Upward*





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Steps in Colour*

Cotton, wool and hemp fiber

52.5 x 39.5 in. (133.3 x 100.3 cm.)

Circa late 1990s to early 2000s, Santiniketan

Unsigned

AB1581

Detail of *Steps in Colour*





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Sun and Moon with Dotted Space*

Cotton, wool and hemp fiber

45.5 x 33.5 in. (115.5 x 85 cm.)

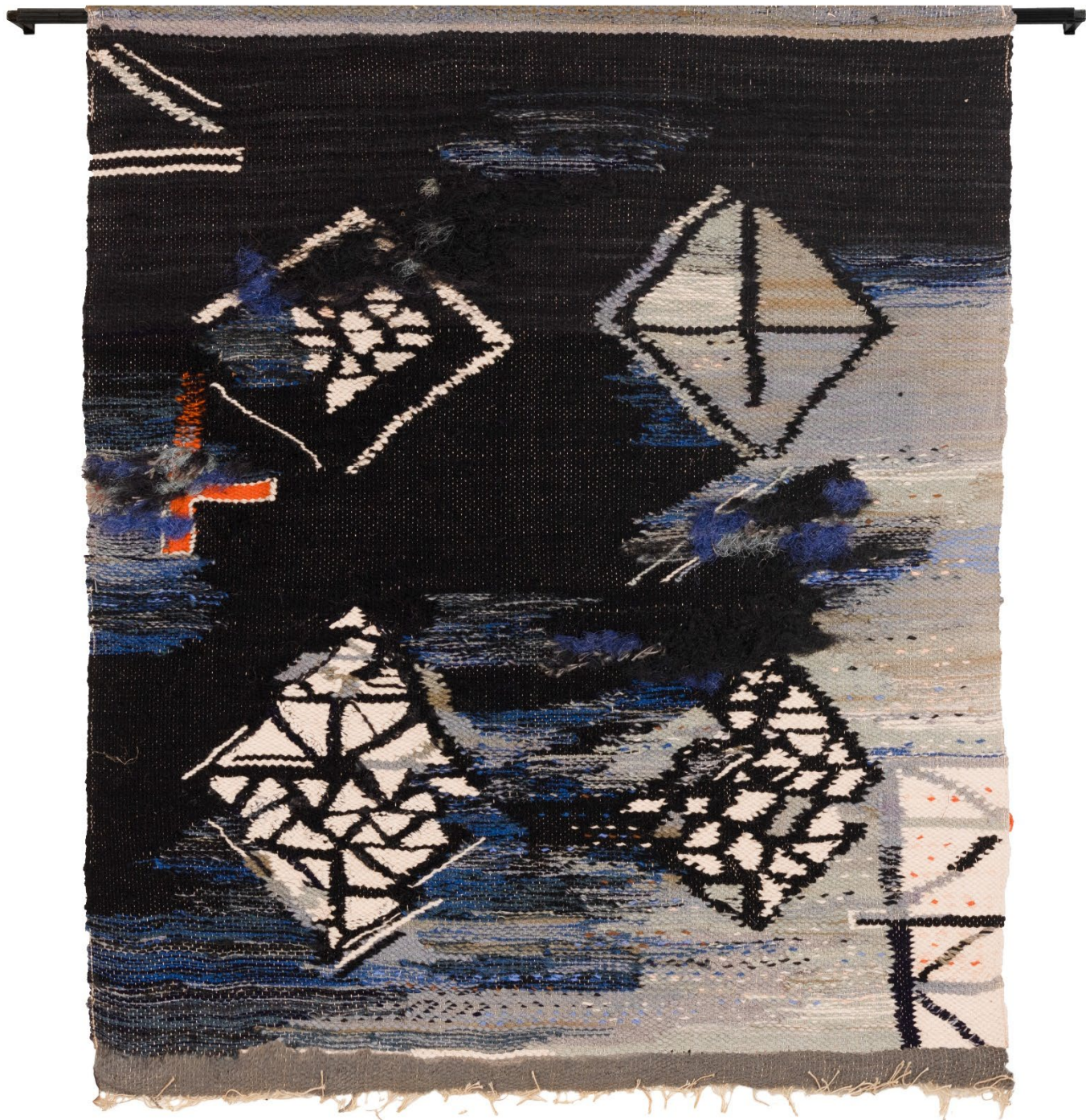
Circa late 1990s to early 2000s, Santiniketan

Signed in English (on the reverse)

AB687

Detail of *Sun and Moon with Dotted Space*





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*The Diamonds - I*

Cotton, wool and hemp fiber

39 x 32.8 in. (99 x 83.3 cm.)

Circa late 1990s to early 2000s, Santiniketan

Unsigned

AB1583

Detail of *The Diamonds* - I





WORKS ON CANVAS



Installation view



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*The Dream of an Idiot - 1*

Acrylic on canvas

60 x 42 in. (152.4 x 106.6 cm.) each

60 x 84 in. (152.4 x 213.3 cm.) overall

Diptych

2009, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali and English (lower right and lower left)

AB1588



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*The Dream of an Idiot - 3*

Acrylic on canvas

59.8 x 42 in. (151.8 x 106.6 cm.) each

59.8 x 84.4 in. 151.8 x 213.3 cm.) overall

Diptych

2023, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB1821

Detail of *The Dream of an Idiot* - 3





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on canvas

42 x 48 in. (106.6 x 121.9 cm.)

2008, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali and English (lower right and lower left)

AB1591



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

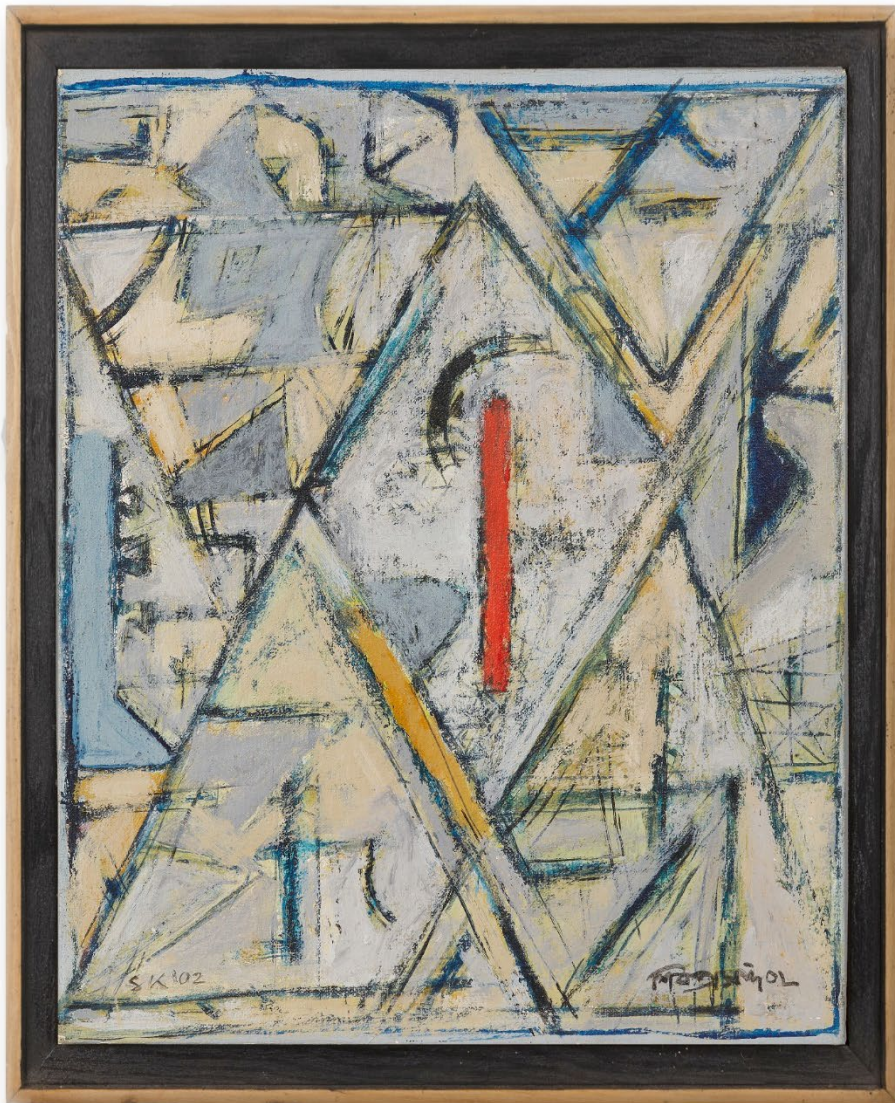
Acrylic on canvas

42 x 48 in. (106.6 x 122 cm.)

2009, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali and English (lower right and lower left)

AB1826



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on canvas

16 x 13 in. (41 x 33 cm.)

2002, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB692



Detail of *Untitled*





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on canvas

15 x 13 in. (38 x 33 cm.)

2015, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali and English ( lower right and lower left)

AB698



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Basic Elements*

Acrylic on canvas

12 x 12 in. (31 x 31 cm.)

2002, Santiniketan

Signed in English (lower right)

AB696



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Basic Elements*

Oil and acrylic on canvas

11.5 x 11.5 in. (29.2 x 29.2 cm.)

2002, Santiniketan

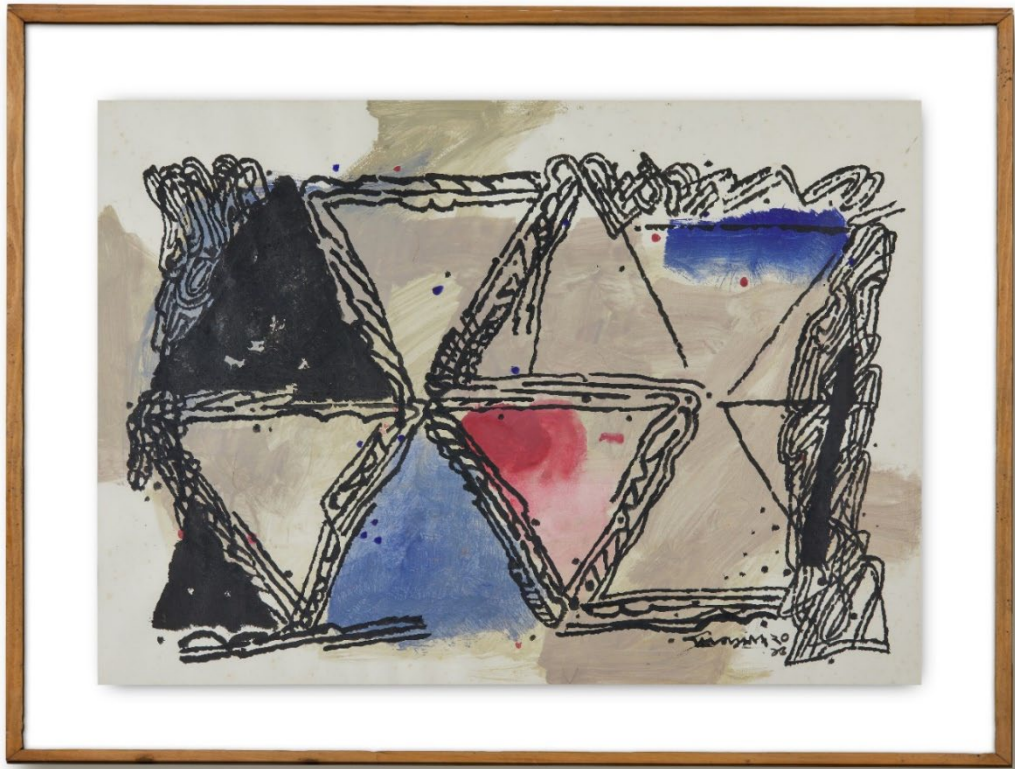
Signed in English (lower right)

AB697

WORKS ON PAPER



Installation view



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

21 x 29 in. (53.3 x 73.6 cm.)

2015, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB683



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

21.5 x 29.5 in. (54.6 x 74.9 cm.)

2013, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali and English (lower left and lower right)

AB1627

Detail of *Untitled*







Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*And Floating Elements*

Acrylic and ink on paper

21 x 29 in. (53.3 x 74 cm.)

2013, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB707



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

21 x 29 in. (53.3 x 74 cm.)

2012, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB706



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

21.5 x 29.5 in. (54.6 x 74.9 cm.)

2011, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali and English (lower left and lower right)

AB1626



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

21.5 x 29.5 in. (54.6 x 74.9 cm.)

2010, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali and English (lower right and lower left)

AB1621

Detail of *Untitled*





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

21 x 29 in. (53.3 x 73.6 cm.)

2010, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB685



Installation view



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Watercolour, ink and dry pastel on paper

21.5 x 29.5 in. (54.6 x 74.9 cm.)

1982, Santiniketan

Signed in English (lower right)

AB1618





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Watercolour and pastel on paper

21 x 28 in. (53 x 72 cm.)

1982, Kolkata

Signed in English (upper right)

AB682



Detail of *Untitled*



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Ink on paper

21 x 28 in. (54 x 71.5 cm.)

1981, Kolkata

Signed in English (lower left)

AB684



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Ink on paper

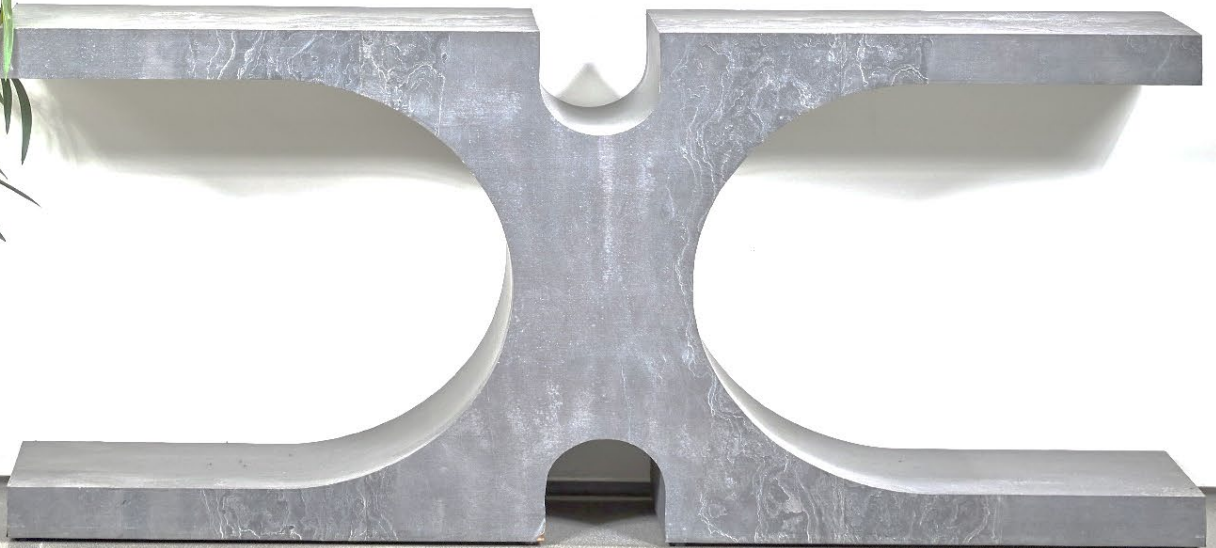
22 x 29 in. (55.8 x 73.6 cm.)

1980, Kolkata

Signed in English (upper left)

AB1611

Installation view





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

10 x 7 in. (25.4 x 17.7 cm.)

2001, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB699

Detail of *Untitled*





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

10 x 7 in. (25.4 x 17.7 cm.)

2001, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB701





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Acrylic on paper

10 x 7 in. (25.4 x 17.7 cm.)

2001, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB702



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Untitled*

Watercolour on paper

10 x 7 in. (25.4 x 17.7 cm.)

2001, Santiniketan

Signed in Bengali (lower right)

AB700

Detail of *Untitled*



COMPTON

PRINTS



Small text label or information card, likely containing details about the artworks or the exhibition.

Installation view



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Dialogue*

Etching and aquatint

7.7 x 8.8 in. (19.5 x 22.3 cm.) image size

11.3 x 14.8 in. (28.7 x 37.5 cm.) sheet size

1984, USA

Signed in English (lower right)

A/P

AB1830



Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Figure II*

Etching and aquatint

16.5 x 13.5 in. (42 x 34.2 cm.) image size

21.6 x 18.2 in. (54.8 x 46.2 cm.) sheet size

1985, USA

Signed in English (lower right)

A/P

AB1831

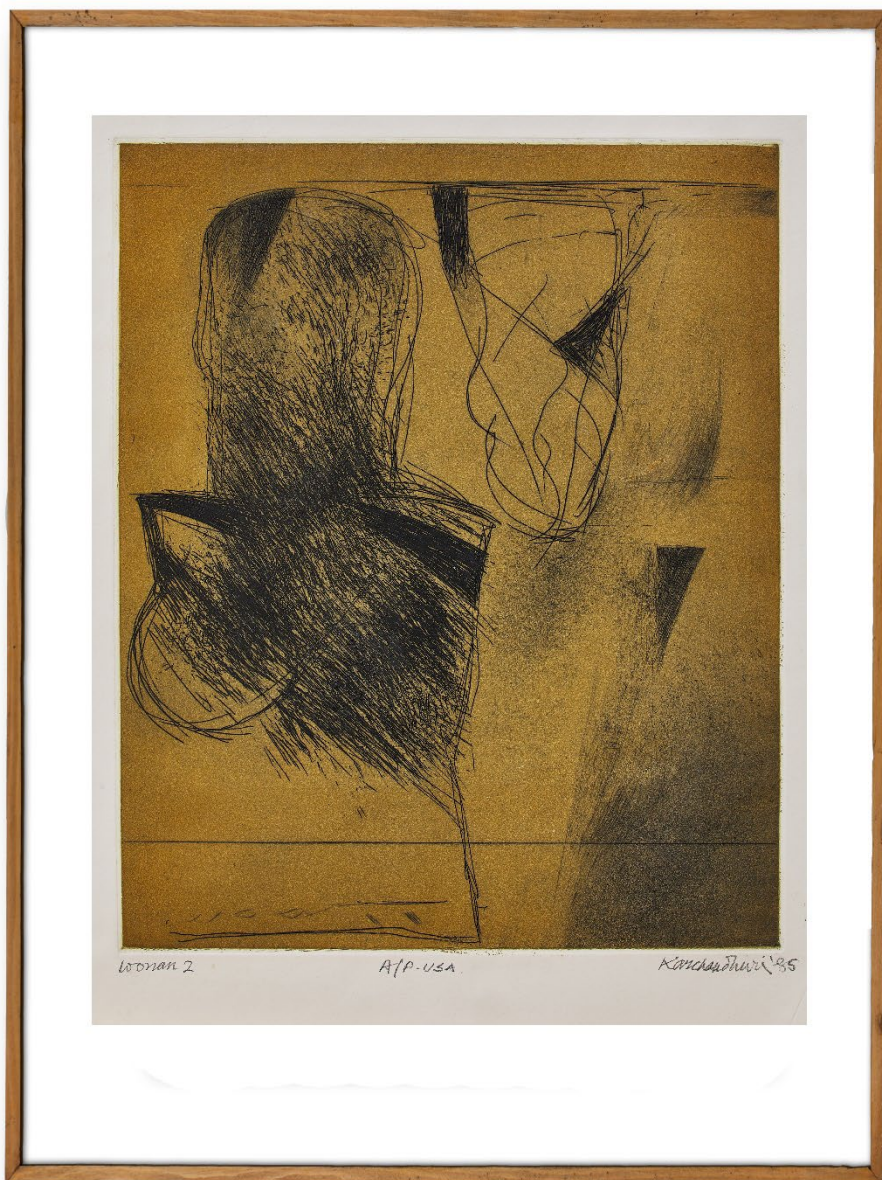


Detail of Figure II

A/P-USA

Karolus Javi '85





Sibaprasad Karchaudhuri (b. 1944)

*Woman 2*

Etching and aquatint

16.3 x 13.5 in. (41.4 x 34.2 cm.) image size

21.6 x 17.7 in. (54.8 x 45 cm.) sheet size

1985, USA

Signed in English (lower right)

A/P

AB1833

# EMAMI ART

KOLKATA, INDIA

**Emami Art** is a contemporary art gallery based in the green purpose built Kolkata Centre for Creativity building in Kolkata, India. Promoting emerging, mid-career and established artists and engaging with contemporary and historical material, the gallery produces exhibitions of modern, contemporary and cutting-edge art as well as commissioning artists to create site-specific pieces.

The gallery programme includes a regular lineup of talks, seminars, panel discussions and conversations with artists, curators and key partners. The gallery delivers its commitment to providing a long-term supportive environment for emerging talent through free access to mentorship programs, workshops, residency opportunities and innovative educational activities that facilitate artistic development. It also stages events across the cultural spectrum, such as concerts, performances, symposiums, publications, collaborative projects, film screenings, and learning-orientated incubator programmes.

# EMAMI ART

**Kolkata Centre for Creativity**

777 Anandapur | E.M. Bypass | Kolkata 700107 | 033 6623 2300

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